

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMCONSUL BELIZE

S E C R E T LONDON 15823

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: BH, GT, UK

SUBJECT: CALLAGHAN ON BELIZE

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN IS DETERMINED TO CUT THE GORDIAN KNOT AND PERMIT BELIZE TO "PROCEED TO INDEPENDENCE BY MEASURED STEPS." HE INTENDS TO REINFORCE BRITISH TROOPS THERE BUT WILL KEEP USG INFORMED BEFORE TAKING ANY ACTION. END SUMMARY

2. IN COURSE OF WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION WITH ME YESTERDAY (OCTOBER 14), FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR HELPFUL USG ROLE IN GUATEMALAN-BELIZEAN DISPUTE. CLAIMING THAT HE HAD NOT FOCUSED ON PROBLEM UNTIL SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, CALLAGHAN ASSERTED HIS FIRM BELIEF THAT HMG REALLY SHOULD NOT HOLD UP BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE ECAUSE OF GUATEMALAN THREATS. HE HAD INSTRUCTED IVMR RICHARD TO WORK FOR A UN RESOLUTION THAT THE GUATEMALALS COULD LIVE WITH, AND TO NEGOTIATE FOR "NEXT THREE MMNTHS," IF NECESSARY, BUT GORDIAN KNOT, HE SAID, HAD TO BE SEVERED AND BELIZE PERMITTED TO "PROCEED TO INDEPENDENCE BY MEASURED STEPS."

3. TURNING TO WHAT HE TERMED SABER-RATTLING BY THE GUATEMALANS ALD US INTELLIGENCE REPORTS OF THREATENING

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MILITARY MOVEMENTS, CALLAGHAN COMMENTED THAT BRITISH

FORCES WOULD BE IN REAL TROUBLE IF GUATEMALANS INVADED AND THAT HE WOULD BE VERY CULPABLE IF HE LET IT HAPPEN. THEREFORE, CALLAGHAN SAID, HE INTENDED IN "LOW-KEY WAY" TO REINFORCE BRITISH TROOPS. NOTING THAT REINFORCEMENTS THUS FAR HAD BEEN MINIMAL ("A FEW BOATS AND HELICOPTERS"), CALLAGHAN ADDED, "BUT I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE IT AT THAT." ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT YET SETTLED HMG POLICY, CALLAGHAN SAID, HE PERSONALLY WANTED TO PUT IN ENOUGH ADDITIONAL TROOPS (150 OR SO, HE THOUGHT) TO HOLD THE GUATEMALANS UNTIL A UN RESOLUTION HAS BEEN PASSED.

4. CALLAGHAN ASSURED ME THAT HMG WOULD INFORM USG BEFORE MAKING ANY MOVES IN ORDER TO GET US REACTION. HE SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO WORRY SECRETARY WITH THIS ALL THE TIME, AND WOULD LIKE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ME ABOUT IT.

5. CALLAGHAN SAID THAT VENEZUELANAS HAD OFFERED TO MAKE INFORMAL CONTACTS WITH BOTH SIDES ON THIS ISSUE, AND COSTA RICANS AND MEXICANS HAD ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE PROBLEM. I INQUIRED WHETHER HMG HAD CONSIDERED RAISING THE MATTER WITH THE OAS AND CALLAGHAN THOUGHT IT WAS AN IDEA WORTH PURSUING. FCO ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY EDMONDS, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, THOUGHT BELIZEANS WOULD NOT BE ATTRACTED BY POSSIBILITY OF OAS INTERCESSION SINCE THEY WOULD ASSUME MOST OAS MEMBERS WOULD SIDE WITH GUATEMALA. I COMMENTED THAT OAS MIGHT INSTEAD FEEL CHALLENGED TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN PROMOTING A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE.
RICHARDSON

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